

## PERSPECTIVES

# Academic Incentives for Faculty Participation in Community-based Participatory Research

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**Recognizing the need to overcome the obstacles of traditional university- and discipline-oriented research approaches, a variety of incentives to promote community-based participatory research (CBPR) are presented. Experiences of existing CBPR researchers are used in outlining how this methodological approach can appeal to faculty: the common ground shared by faculty and community leaders in challenging the status quo; opportunities to have an impact on local, regional, and national policy; and opening doors for new research and funding opportunities. Strategies for promoting CBPR in universities are provided in getting CBPR started, changing institutional practices currently inhibiting CBPR, and institutionalizing CBPR. Among the specific strategies are: development of faculty research networks; team approaches to CBPR; mentoring faculty and students; using existing national CBPR networks; modifying tenure and promotion guidelines; development of appropriate measures of CBPR scholarship; earmarking university resources to support CBPR; using Institutional Review Boards to promote CBPR; making CBPR-oriented faculty appointments; and creating CBPR centers.**

**KEY WORDS:** community-based participatory research; collaborative research; policy research; evaluation research; faculty development.

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A combination of traditionalism and turf protection plays a significant part in the academy's resistance to encouraging the development of the various forms of community-based participatory research (CBPR). Although university faculty generally see themselves as among the more open-minded and progressive forces in our society, at the same time they are more likely to be the defenders of constraining academic traditions. These are traditions related to who defines the research issues, how research is done, and how research outcomes are used. Discipline-defined and driven research is the norm and is seen as the "highest standard" of research. University-based departments and professional schools—the local

outposts of national and international disciplines—are typically the arbiters of who has the appropriate knowledge to define researchable issues and who is qualified to do research.

Community-based participatory research represents a challenge to these traditions. However, most of us who use CBPR do not see it as a replacement for traditional, discipline-driven research; rather, we see this as complementary to traditional research. By effectively tapping community knowledge, CBPR is particularly effective for gaining insights into persistent social problems and developing solutions. For this same reason, some traditional academics see CBPR as a radical approach because it recognizes that the knowledge of individuals outside of academia can be equally as important in defining, guiding, and completing research as the knowledge inside academia. Traditional research can be compared to an old-fashioned marriage, where the husband has more power and resources than the wife. In this case the university uses its power to call the shots in the relationship with the community. In contrast, CBPR resembles a more modern egalitarian marriage. When university and community get together, they recognize that they each have resources and responsibilities in the relationship. Both parties see that this marriage of community-knowledge and discipline-based knowledge as critical to understanding pressing problems and doing credible research.

This article examines the academic barriers to conducting CBPR, particularly those that discourage faculty from engaging in such research. How can these barriers be eliminated? How can we motivate faculty and provide incentives for them to engage in participatory research? Are there successful research center models that nurture CBPR inside and outside of academia? What roles can government agencies and funders play in encouraging CBPR and other community-anchored approaches to research?

## BARRIERS TO CONDUCTING COMMUNITY-BASED PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH

There is a strong undercurrent of tradition in most universities and colleges that helps to maintain the status quo and inhibit the adoption of innovative research models. First, academic departments and professional schools are

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very protective of their turf. This is not only the case in their interaction with each other, but also when they interact with the community. The thought that community members might have something to say in defining, guiding and completing research is not part of the traditional academic research model. Research agendas are supposed to be shaped by one's disciplines, not the community. Middle ground is not the option.

Second, this distance from the community is partially justified by the notion that the community is naturally biased in protecting its self-interest. The assumption is that academic disciplines and professional schools are more objective and free from the day-to-day political influences present in outside communities. Third, traditionalists see community-based research as limited in scope. It is seen as weaker in its ability to explain and its ability to have an impact when compared with national research. Finally, the legal system that rules over the university—the tenure and promotion system—discourages new ways of approaching social programs and research and helps to preserve this status quo.

### **The Discipline Defines Research Priorities**

Much of the research completed by university-based research is aimed at furthering the knowledge base of the researcher's discipline. While there are often social policy implications of such research, the primary goal is not social change *per se*. The intent of the more "pure" academic-based research projects is adding to the "knowledge in the field" and publishing in peer-reviewed scholarly journals. In contrast, CBPR has as its end not merely increasing the body of knowledge available to us, but also the goal of involving community members in the research process, improving a community's own capacity to engage in research, and facilitating social change.

Research ideas in traditional research are not generated through a participatory process involving members of a constituency, e.g., poor people, victims of crime, mothers seeking quality child care for their preschoolers, or people who are HIV-positive. Rather, research ideas are generated within the discipline. This happens when journal editors make decisions about what gets published in journals, particularly the "top" journals in any field. It happens when colleagues talk to each other in departmental gatherings or at national conventions in their field. It also happens when faculty advise their graduate students as to what research topics to pick for doctoral dissertations or master's theses. The idea of having people outside the circle of universities, research institutes, or professional associations involved in setting the research agenda is an alien concept in traditional research.

Some academics do write reports for consumption by nonprofessional audiences ranging from government agencies and corporations to nonprofit organizations and regional advocacy organizations. However, even in these cases, the research generally is not participatory. It does

not try to increase community capacity, and does not always see social change as its goal.

### **Community-based Research Is Seen as "Political" and Biased**

Allowing community partners, especially representatives of the population to be studied, into the research process is viewed by traditionalists as politicizing the research process and biasing the research outcomes. Critics say that the objectivity of academic inquiry is being compromised. However, all research is political both in terms of how we select the research focus and how we structure the research process. The mere choice of what to research is a political decision. For example, a decision to research how to support more affordable housing in a middle-income community versus how to attract more developers to build more middle-income housing in that same community is a political decision. A decision by one social scientist to research what computer games college students play versus the choice of another social scientist to research the lack of access that children in low-income communities have to computers represent political decisions. Involvement of community partners in selecting research issues and conceptualizing research design does not mean that research outcomes will be biased. As long as rigorous methodologies are used in pursuing research questions, outcomes will be credible and valuable to both the community and the discipline.

### **Community-based Research Is Seen as Parochial**

Traditionalists see community-based research as less powerful because it is limited in scope, both in terms of potential geographical level at which it can be applied and in terms of its generalizability to theory. Research taking place within a community—whether it is comparing different institutions within the community or using qualitative methods to describe a social problem in more detail—is not as valued as national research in many academic circles. This traditional culture of research also worships the theoretical and devalues the practical. Indeed, at the wine and hor d'oeuvre reception at the annual professional meeting, to have your research referred to as "applied" or "local" is as likely meant to be a subtle put down as it is meant to be a compliment. "Community-based" and "grassroots" labels are viewed as generic, something that will not sell well in the national and international academic markets of important ideas.

### **Tenure and Promotion Guidelines as an Obstacle**

The most visible way in which this traditional culture of academia emerges is in personnel decisions. During the hiring process and later, at the tenure and promotion decision points, the discipline-oriented perspective within academia is most apparent. Sometimes this culture can be indifferent to community involvement; other times it is

actually hostile. A faculty member's involvement in community-based research may be seen as a distraction from the real reason that he or she was hired. People are typically hired to cover teaching and/or research sub-specialties in the department as defined by the discipline.

This in-grown culture of research is reinforced by a tenure and promotion processes that count peer-reviewed articles, not impact, as the measure of its success. On the figurative or actual spreadsheets used by academic vice presidents, deans, tenure and promotion committees, columns are titled "articles published," "papers presented," and "grants received." Few of these university decision makers or decision-making bodies seriously count impact on the local community or the region. Few guardians of academic awards have an assessment column titled "contribution to the improved quality of life in the local community."

### ACADEMIC FACTORS THAT FACILITATE OR COULD FACILITATE CBPR

Insofar as universities justify the relevance of their research activities, their curriculum, and their other institutional activities to prospective students, potential donors, elected officials (local, state, and federal), the media, and the local community, encouragement of CBPR has its advantages. The need to show relevance may vary by the type of university and by points in time. When justifying the upcoming year's budget, officials from public universities are always in need of evidence to document their institution's success in educating students and in serving the broader community. A few years ago, after I made a presentation on our center's CBPR projects to top administrators at Temple University, the Vice Provost said, "Boy I wish I had a list like that last week when I was making my annual presentation to the state legislature in Harrisburg." Moreover, in environments of government fiscal austerity, such as many states are experiencing right now, documentation of how university activities are having positive impact on communities statewide is a significant political value. Similarly, private universities—particularly universities and colleges that draw a high proportion of students from the region around them, have a large regional alumni/ae base, and place a high proportion of students in regional rather than national job markets—also may be particularly sensitive to demonstrating their impact on the local community, and thus amenable to supporting CBPR across departments and schools.

### Helping Universities Get Off the Dime on Interdisciplinary Orientation

Community-based participatory research may be one tool that future-oriented university administrators can use to break down decades-old disciplinary turf boundaries and create an effective and responsive university. Community-based participatory research tends to be interdisciplinary research. Community needs typically

do not present themselves as specifically nursing problems, economic problems, sociological problems, or social work problems. They are by their nature holistic and interdisciplinary.

In my 25 years in academia, I have heard deans and vice presidents talk about the value of interdisciplinary initiatives and programs. Interdisciplinary approaches are intellectually and financially efficient. They allow for a combining of complementary sets of knowledge to address a pressing social problem, and enable researchers to cut through layers of departmental administration to more directly access needed talent. However, despite its recognized value, there are relatively few interdisciplinary programs in universities. Departments and professional schools defined by traditional boundaries are more common than programs developed to address community-defined areas such as poverty reduction, health care access enhancement, or children's health and welfare.

Even looking at its own internal logic, to say nothing about its ability to respond to pressing society needs, the modern university is remarkably inefficient and ineffective in fostering innovation. In a 1998 *Science* editorial, Michael Gazzaniga, Director of Dartmouth's Center for Cognitive Neuroscience, stated, "The modern university is partitioned along academic lines that no longer truly reflect today's intellectual life. These academic groupings are now just categories that accountants and business managers use to build a budget. This issue is most pronounced in scientific disciplines...."<sup>1</sup> In a 1999 article in *Change* magazine, Richard Edwards, the Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, adds that, "in so many cases, the most provocative and interesting work is done at the intersections where disciplines meet, or by collaborators blending several seemingly disparate disciplines to attach real problems afresh."<sup>2</sup>

Community-based participatory research's natural practice of framing issues in interdisciplinary terms and its further advantage of bringing together other seemingly disparate partners—community and university—may provide a particularly effective stimulus to bring CBPR into the core of university. If pressures mount to make higher education more adaptable to changing needs in the society around it, an ability to reconfigure its expertise in the form of interdisciplinary centers and programs would make it more nimble in responding to change. This is not to suggest that traditional academic disciplines be eliminated, but rather that universities demonstrate more flexibility and innovation in creating more interdisciplinary connections in creating certificate programs, majors, graduate programs, and research centers.

### Taking Advantage of an Age of Engagement in Higher Education

Community engagement and service learning have become recognized parts of college and university mission

statements in the past decade.<sup>3-5</sup> This is driven by a need to establish a relevance and a usefulness, not only to the communities immediately around campuses, but also to the broader society. As the cost of college education has skyrocketed over the past 20 years, there is more pressure than ever to justify costs—justify to students, justify to donors, and in the case of public institutions, justify to elected officials. Simply educating future workers is not enough anymore. The research products, indeed the research process, of higher education are under greater scrutiny than ever before. What is the balance of costs and benefits for education? What is the balance of costs and benefits for federal and private foundation dollars invested in university-based research?

In an Information Age where non-academic organizations—from corporations to community-based organizations—are increasingly sophisticated in the education levels of their leadership and in their accumulated knowledge, academia is losing its exclusive claim as the center of knowledge. As Gene Rice, Director of the American Association of Higher Education Forum on Faculty Roles and Rewards, explains in his influential essay, “Making a Place for the New American Scholar,”

*What was once the exclusive purview of highly educated professors working in universities and specialized laboratories has become the responsibility of well-trained experts working in a wide array of social institutions. Knowledge is breaching preconceived boundaries established both within our colleges and universities and beyond. And, if we really attend to the legitimacy of different approaches of knowing, the boundaries of our academic careers are going to have to change.<sup>6</sup>*

It is time for the academy to wake up and recognize the new world around itself. Within the United States, we are seeing an increased “democratization of knowledge” where access to and creation of knowledge is being shared by institutions and where it is less and less the exclusive domain of universities.<sup>7,8</sup> Its continued relevance is dependent on its ability to work with communities outside the academy. One such way of doing this is encouraging more CBPR. There is self-interest on the part of universities to include CBPR as a routine research approach. It is a natural link between university knowledge and community knowledge in this new age. Without employing such a linkage, the university runs the risk of drifting into isolation and irrelevance.

Many students and younger faculty are no longer complacent to accept traditional teaching models. As Larry Spence explains in his article, “The Case Against Teaching,” dramatic changes in the world around us are challenging current notions of knowledge and education: “You can rely on experts only at great risk since their narrow focus guarantees ignorance of human needs. This world that clamors for our ideas, dollars, and loyalty simultaneously demands a knowledge of self and science that far exceeds past educational aspirations.”<sup>9</sup> Early-in-their-career faculty and graduate students interviewed in

the American Association for Higher Education’s “Heeding New Voices” project expressed a consistent desire “to have an impact,” “to give back to their communities,” and to better connect their university lives with their nonuniversity lives.<sup>6</sup> Undergraduate students are actively participating in the service learning programs are now in place in virtually all American college campuses. Teaching methods that incorporate the more messy, unpredictable, but relevant practice-based approaches are attracting more interest. CBPR is one such approach.

### **CBPR Really Is Consistent with Interests of Faculty: How do we Motivate Faculty on a Personal Level?**

***Emphasize the Common Ground Between Faculty and CBPR.*** If you really stop and think about the appeal of CBPR, it is quite consistent with many things that faculty have always found appealing about the academy. Many faculty were initially attracted to higher education because it is a world where questioning the status quo can be the norm. It is a world full of challenges and unpredictability. It is not a 9 to 5 world of daily routines. The ideal classroom is a place where students and faculty stretch each other’s imagination by asking questions and challenging assumptions. The ideal research project is a trip into unknown territory to seek new ideas and new ways of understanding the world around us. The norm of the academia is to constantly question. Just ask the undergraduate looking at the red marks on his essay exam, or ask the graduate student looking over all the penciled in comments on her first drafts of dissertation chapters.

Work in this academic environment has parallels to work in the communities outside the university’s walls. Questioning the status quo, attempting to make order out of disorder, and trying to build the capacity of those around us to address the challenges in front of us—aren’t these also the characteristics of a community organizer? of a creative community social service agency director? of a public health outreach worker trying to find effective ways of addressing persistent levels of AIDS/HIV in a local community? Given these common interests, how do we play matchmaker between faculty and community leaders? How do we demonstrate that CBPR fits right into the academic model?

An initial step is just to describe the process and outcomes of CBPR to faculty. The best spokespersons for CBPR are those faculty and students who engage in it regularly. The excitement, the zeal, the animation that the engaged researcher exudes when describing research is an advertisement for CBPR. The student who now understands theory and understands course material because she has seen it come alive in a community setting becomes the poster child for CBPR. The ability to take the theoretical, the hypothetical, the textbook case study out of the classroom and bring it to life in a community setting is a powerful outcome of CBPR.



**CBPR is Really Traditional “Research Plus.”** The traditional model of research relevance is to present material at professional conferences and get them published in journals or books. There is no requirement that research actually get into the hands of policy makers, that it actually be used. The traditional litmus test for successful research is that peer reviewers (peers in your discipline) deem the research of sufficient quality to be published and read by others in the discipline. However, is this storage in one’s discipline’s knowledge vaults really enough to motivate faculty in an increasingly complex society?

Community-based participatory research is not different from traditional academic research; it is really traditional research and then some. It is research to be consumed, not to be stored on library shelves or hidden away in academic journals. It is research that can answer questions that classroom textbooks and existing research fail to address. It is research with an impact. It is research with a built-in constituency. From the start of a research project, community-based participatory researchers know that their outcomes will be relevant to the community, because they helped define the issues in the first place. When partnering with agencies and community organizations, they already have in mind a use for your needs assessment or your evaluation before it is even written.

For faculty and students, seeing their research used by community partners to improve the quality of programs is a great motivator. Seeing their research covered by the media as useful information in policy debates is heady stuff. In fact, disciplinary professional associations are increasingly publishing policy newsletters or including sections on their web sites that communicate research digests in clear, jargon-free language, to the broader public. This is certainly one indication that professional associations recognize the discipline’s self interest in demonstrating its relevance to the quality of life around us. It is also recognition by associations that there is a need to change traditional academic culture, and that there is a need to convince faculty that there is self-interest in making connections between research and policy/program application. It is a way of affirming that what they do is relevant to the broader society.

**CBPR is Also “Research Plus” Because Its Team Approach Connects Faculty with Other Researchers and Practitioners with Similar Interests.** It is not lonely research, it is sociable research. Community-based participatory researchers are not Lone Rangers; rather, they crave colleagues. In a more complex world with more complex problems, the ability to enlist colleagues with different perspectives and different skills—whether they are from other disciplines or from community-based organizations—is a big plus. It is reassuring to a researcher that a final product has been under the scrutiny of a number of team members with complimentary expertise.

A researcher can increase her confidence that she is not missing something important in the community,

because she has research colleagues who know the community well. In doing CBPR, researchers come to understand that we have increased capacity to analyze data because we have multiple perspectives at the table—from the PhD researcher who knows the issue from the perspective of the discipline and its body of collected research to the person in the community who lives the issue on a day-to-day basis. CBPR means research becomes more strategically targeted, validity measures increase, and analytical red-herrings are avoided because multiple perspectives are watching over your work.

**CBPR Opens Up Doors to Significant Research Avenues and Funding for That Research.** Unlike the traditional Lone Ranger model of academic research, research partnerships with the community very quickly open up additional research opportunities, many with funding attached. Our experience at the Loyola University Chicago Center for Urban Research and Learning has been that the positive results of collaborative research projects have brought new partners and new projects to the center. In fact, we receive more requests to do research than we have capacity to do. Past success and the growth of trust between community and university also mean that there is greater access to community research sites.

**CBPR Provides New Publication Outlets for Research.** There are an increasing number of journals that welcome articles based on applied and/or community-based research. In addition to these peer-reviewed journals, access to broader, more popular, publication outlets increases with CBPR. A joint university–community publication of a research report that is distributed to and read by 2000 residents in the local community is certainly of some value. While it may take some modification of tenure and promotion guidelines to recognize the value of this type of research dissemination, research read by 2000 community residents and used by 5 community agencies to direct their services certainly should be of some comparable value to a journal article read by 200 fellow psychologists or public health professionals.

**CBPR Is Interactive Research with a Human Face.** Particularly for faculty concerned with connecting research with teaching and training, CBPR is dynamic. A study on hunger in the local community may not be just a collection of stark numbers, but is likely to include a human dimension when researchers come into more direct contact with the children, adults, families, and community workers affected by, or trying to address, nutritional needs.

An inevitable emotional and caring element emerges in such research, both for faculty and students. The traditional rule-of-thumb is that this can compromise scientific integrity and diminish the usefulness of the research. However, there is absolutely no logical reason why one cannot complete rigorous research and at the same time be exposed to the emotional side of a social problem, the

human face of a social problem. In fact, such an approach may actually enhance the research by producing a deeper understanding of social behavior.

Use of passion and concern for those in need as a motivator to complete research should not take a back seat to the cool, remote, sanitized research often presented in academic journals. Many faculty are motivated by personal passions and concerns, but may not be public about this in a university environment where it is frowned upon. Efforts to take back the humanity of research—for example, a humanity of research that existed in the field of sociology back in the days of the Chicago School of Sociology in the 1920s—can motivate and legitimate those faculty who may have been cowering in the face of what they think are the disapproving eyes of the keepers of elite journals in the field.

### **CBPR Really Is Consistent with Interests of Faculty: How do we Create University Environments to Encourage and Protect Community-engaged Faculty?**

The answer to how we can create CBPR-friendly environments within the academy is, in a word, organize. Whether it is a matter of starting up a network of 4 or 5 CBPR faculty within an institution or ultimately establishing a fully-developed, endowed CBPR center, promoting CBPR within the academy is a matter of organizing. There is a need to organize faculty, students, administrators, and community partners. Organizing provides a supportive network, a broad-based of expertise, political support, and better access to resources—from institutional in-kind support to outside funding. Based on my own experiences in helping to develop the Loyola University Chicago Center for Urban Research and Learning (CURL), which has a \$5 million endowment to support CBPR to knowledge of other formal and informal networks around the country, there are a number of ways in which we can bolster support for CBPR in the university. It is important to add that typically, even large centers start with small initiatives and grow from there. What are the lessons learned? What are some ideas to strengthen CBPR in universities? These can be organized into 3 categories: 1) getting CBPR organized, recognized, and up and running; 2) changing institutional practices; and 3) institutionalizing CBPR.

#### **GETTING CBPR ORGANIZED**

##### **Development of Small Networks of Faculty and Students**

Before any specialized university resources are on the table and before any foundation grant money is received, faculty and students can coalesce around collaborative university–community research projects. These can be faculty and students within the same university, or faculty and students among different universities. There is hardly a university or college in the country that doesn't have

some faculty working on community-based research projects. Seeking out fellow researchers, with the potential to join together on a specific project or just to provide a sounding board for current and future research, is a meaningful first step in organizing CBPR interests.

##### **Use of a Team-based Approach in Completing Research**

Research teams consisting of faculty members, graduate students, undergraduates, and community organization staff can integrate a full range of perspectives for each project. Loyola's CURL has used this approach effectively on scores of projects.<sup>10</sup> Teaching and learning occurs in multiple directions. It is not just a faculty-student process. For example, faculty may learn from community leaders, just as graduate students learn from undergraduates who may be familiar with a particular community.

##### **Increasing the Visibility of CBPR in the Eyes of the Public and University Administrators**

All smart organizers know that gaining the attention and support of others, whether it is community residents or key decision-makers, is a resource that can be translated into institutional change. CBPR lends itself to positive results that are naturals in getting media attention and pleasing university administrators seeking to document how their institution is serving the broader community. Therefore, do not be shy in promoting the positive outcomes of CBPR projects.

##### **Mentoring Faculty and Students in CBPR**

If it is important to promote CBPR in the public arena, it is even more important to nurture faculty and student interest in CBPR. Part of this is countering the academic conservatism that produces comments to junior faculty like, "Don't do that community-based research now, wait until after you get tenure; focus right on doing the kind of research that will get published in respectable journals." Established, tenured, full-professors who have traveled the CBPR route can counter this remark, using their own careers as role models for junior faculty. Mentoring can happen within departments but can take place also across departments as informal CBPR networks grow within the university.

##### **Using Regional and National CBPR Networks to Strengthen Local Work**

Support for CBPR does not have to be limited to intrainstitutional networks. There are a number of established or developing national networks that are readily available resources available to support CBPR at the local level. In some cases these networks are broad in scope, supporting the general idea of CBPR without any particular policy focus. The Loka Institute and its sponsorship of the Community Research Network provides access to a number

of university-based and community-based research centers or networks.<sup>11</sup> The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development's Community Outreach Partnership Center program regularly funds university-based CBPR initiatives.<sup>12</sup> A project managed through the Bonner Foundation, with grants from the Corporation for National Service, has helped create a core group of more than 25 institutions that house CBPR centers or networks, and now are building local and regional CBR networks. With the development of more and more sophisticated Internet resources, a number of Web-based information networks focusing on university–community collaboration have developed. One of the better-developed ones is COMM-ORG: The On-line Conference on Community Organizing and Development.<sup>13</sup>

In other cases, these are policy-specific networks that bring together CBPR activists inside and outside of academia who are interested in a particular area. For example, the Community Campus Partnerships for Health (CCPH) maintains a network of over 1,000 communities and campuses “that are collaborating to promote health through service-learning, community-based research, community service and other partnership strategies.”<sup>14</sup> CCPH holds annual conferences and regularly publishes a newsletter featuring work of university-based CBPR centers in areas of health research. At the federal government level, the Interagency Working Group for Community-based Participatory Research, organized by the Division of Extramural Research and Training within the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, is actively looking at ways in which key federal agencies already support CBPR and how new initiatives could be established. Such networks represent valuable resources to local researchers seeking both funding and guidance on their own research work.

In still other cases, a number of national advocacy organizations serve as points of contact for activist researchers interested in linking with fellow researchers within their own region or in other areas of the country. While not specifically promoting CBPR, hundreds of organizations ranging from groups like PolicyLink, the National Neighborhood Coalition (that focus on increasing community voice in research and advocacy in sustainable development) to the Children's Defense Fund, the Alliance to End Childhood Lead Poisoning (that focus on children's issues, including health issues) represent major resources to local CBPR researchers.

## CHANGING INSTITUTIONAL PRACTICES

### Modification of Tenure and Promotion Guidelines

Community-engaged research can be added to guidelines not as a replacement to traditional discipline-based research, but as an additional model that integrates CBPR and disciplinary work. The Tenure and Promotion Procedures at Portland State University are among the most frequently cited as a model that encourages and rewards

community-engaged teaching and research.<sup>15</sup> First, the Procedures define scholarship as including discovery, integration, interpretation, and application. They formally recognize community impact as one of the ways in which the significance of research outcomes can be judged: “Faculty engaged in community outreach can make a difference in their communities and beyond by defining or resolving relevant social problems or issues, by facilitating organizational development, by improving existing practices or programs, and by enriching the cultural life of the community.” Collaborative, interdisciplinary, and interinstitutional research is specifically recognized as credible scholarship. Given the collaborative nature of CBPR many research reports and articles produced are coauthored. Furthermore, since CBPR publications are often coauthored, it is important to note that the Portland State guidelines recognize and even promote shared authorship.

Most importantly, the Portland State procedures extensively describe how “community outreach” is part of recognized scholarship. Many tenure and promotion guidelines, as well as annual faculty evaluation reports, make reference to “community service,” but fail to carefully define it. Faculty and faculty appointment review committees often treat this as a weak residual category. In 8 years as an academic department chairperson, I saw everything from supervising a Cub Scout troop to judging a “beauty pageant” included under this heading! The Portland State guidelines are clear in defining community outreach and include such activities as contributing “to the definition or resolution of a relevant social problem...,” “use of state-of-the-art knowledge to facilitate change in organizations or institutions,” and application of “disciplinary or interdisciplinary expertise to help...organizations in conceptualizing and solving problems.” Use of evaluative statements from clients (community partners) is also explicitly encouraged.

### Development of Appropriate Measures of CBPR Scholarship

One should expect the CBPR to be as rigorous as any research. The Portland State University tenure and promotion guidelines help to provide a context for evaluating CBPR. However, the quality of CBPR cannot be judged solely by how it contributes to one's discipline, and by how academic-based peers judge the quality of one's research. Rather, it also must be measured by what positive impacts it has on communities, community organizations, and community agencies. We need to broaden our definitions of quality research. Specifically, for CBPR we need to ask:

- 1) What impact has the research had on improving the quality of life in the community?
- 2) Has the research led to or contributed to the development of new policies in community-based organizations, social service agencies, governmental programs, or other relevant organizational entity?

- 3) Has research and/or evaluation capacity been transferred to the community?
- 4) What have been other knowledge-transfer components of the research (to community organization staff, residents, and students involved in the project)?
- 5) Has the research increased community voice in determining future direction of policies affecting community members or consumers of a particular social service?
- 6) How well has the research translated knowledge in the researcher's field to the community and vice versa?

We also need to recognize that while the products of research may be traditional written reports and articles, they also may include different media (e.g., web-based publications and information sites, public presentations in the community, and reports in newspapers and TV documentaries/news) and different processes (e.g., staff training and community education). One would assume that quality CBPR researchers will translate some of their research into traditional discipline-based publications, but in documenting quality CBPR work, career portfolios are much more effective in painting a full picture of outcomes and impacts.

To judge how well a researcher has completed quality work, CBPR needs to be evaluated by more than the traditional intradisciplinary committee. Just as the research itself is collaborative, so too should the evaluation be collaborative. While it is critical to have representatives from a researcher's discipline, the inclusion of members of community organizations and other CBPR researchers from outside the institution is critical; this truly would be a committee of peers for a CBPR researcher. In terms of discipline-based evaluators, it is important the CBPR can demonstrate a credible foundation in research and theoretical traditions. However, peer evaluation is a 2-way street. By participating in CBPR outcomes, members of any particular discipline gain increased understanding of how this approach connects their discipline to new areas and represents new opportunities for research. In terms of community peers, it is most appropriate for community members to be involved in judging community impact. Involvement in the process also will give community members increased insight into the academic research process and ownership over the intellectual and practical outcomes of CBPR. Finally, as CBPR grows, the involvement of other CBPR researchers from outside the particular university and community can help to confirm that local standards are consistent with accepted national practices.

### **Structuring Protected CBPR Time for Faculty, Particularly Junior Faculty**

Course reductions and leaves of absence are typically the mechanisms for protecting faculty research time. By

either making sure that CBPR is viewed as a legitimate activity qualifying for such resources or by specifically creating CBPR leaves or fellowships, faculty development can be enhanced. Since substantive and methodological approaches adopted early in a faculty member's career shape future career directions, this support is of particular importance to junior faculty.

### **Earmarking Existing Undergraduate and Graduate Scholarship or Fellowship Support for Students Involved in CBPR Projects**

Chairpersons, deans, or provosts can earmark an existing number of fellowships for CBPR. These can help to support the CBPR teams. Short of funded fellowships, inviting undergraduates to participate in CBPR through internships and graduate students through course-related or thesis/dissertation research represents another resource.

### **Creation of Interdisciplinary and Adjunct University-Community Appointments to Promote CBPR**

Developing university-wide incentives to promote engaged scholarship may be a more productive avenue than attempting to punish departments for parochial, discipline-bound perspectives. The establishment of interdisciplinary faculty positions specifically designed to address the pressing needs of the broader community, which typically cross disciplinary lines, is one answer. By awarding new or replacing existing intradepartmental faculty positions, the university can give priority to departments hiring new faculty with a community-engagement orientation. Adjunct appointments, creating positions where occupants split a full-time position between the university and a community-based organization, social service agency, or regional advocacy organization, can create a workforce that weaves together the university and community sides of the CBPR equation. Short of such full-time positions, it also would be possible to create a few community fellowships, supporting community leaders part-time for involvement in research projects or in teaching or coteaching seminars. A number of professional schools already have related positions; these could be expanded to other departments and schools that traditionally have not used such appointments to better link "university-based" knowledge with "community-based" knowledge.

### **Using Institutional Review Boards to Promote CBPR**

Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) have been mandated by the Federal government to oversee the protection of human subjects in research. Implicit in their charge is the broader protection of communities being researched. Although a central component of IRB review is determining and minimizing potential risks to human subjects, review procedures explicitly ask applicants to weigh potential risks



against the benefits to the subject population, i.e., communities (geographically-based and non-geographically-based). Because research often drains resources from resource-strapped community organizations and nonprofits (particularly in low-income communities), it is logical to expand “risk” to include the cost of research to the community. Costs in the form of precious collective time spent in guiding university-based researchers and costs in actually responding to surveys, interviews, and other requests for information are significant. Given these costs, perhaps IRBs should increase their scrutiny of how research is benefiting the community. Is research increasing the knowledge that the community needs in understanding and addressing pressing issues? Is research increasing the capacity of the community organizations to address local needs? What voice does the community have in the research process? To what extent do cooperating community organizations get their fair share of research funding (direct costs and indirect costs)? What voice do community organizations have in final research reports? In essence, we should understand that ethical research is not merely research that does no harm, but ethical research is research that uses limited resources (often government-provided resources) to improve the quality of life in communities. Through its integration of community into the research process itself, CBPR is well positioned to effectively answer these questions and address these issues. Since IRBs are mandated to have community members already, there may be some natural allies in broadening the scope of ethnical research and bringing CBPR into the mainstream.

## INSTITUTIONALIZING CBPR

### Linking CBPR to an Existing Administrative Office

A number of community-university collaborative initiatives are directed by faculty or administrators who serve as assistants to presidents, provosts, academic vice presidents, or deans. Such a relationship may be a way of instantly getting institutional recognition and gaining access to institutional resources. At the same time, it is not likely that CBPR would be the only focus of an upper administration-linked initiative. Given top administrators' sensitivities to broad institutional needs, it is likely the CBPR would be one of a number of approaches used in a university's community-engagement activities.

### Linking CBPR to Service Learning

Because most campuses have service learning programs and offices, this is a logical ally for some CBPR activities, particularly if undergraduate education is a primary focus of the institution. In many respects CBPR represents the more complex end of service learning, requiring higher skill levels from students and research managers in the form of graduate students and/or faculty.

Given this concept, one should not assume that CBPR can be managed by the existing service learning infrastructure. CBPR's complexity, both in terms of relationship to community partners and in terms of knowledge of methodologies, requires a level of management skills and research training not always present within service learning offices.

*Creation of a Fully Funded CBPR Center.* CBPR centers can serve multiple functions, such as:

- 1) institutional advocates for CBPR (both for research and integration into curriculum);
- 2) a point of entry for potential community partners;
- 3) incubators for CBPR projects where both university faculty/students and community leaders are involved in new project conceptualization;
- 4) places where multiple CBPR efforts can be concentrated and be made more visible inside and outside of the university;
- 5) information and resource brokers that serve as “matchmakers” between university and community, faculty in different departments and professional schools, and faculty and graduate students;
- 6) technical assistance centers for CBPR projects;
- 7) conveners of collaborative researchers to discuss ongoing projects; and
- 8) alternative socialization venues that allow undergraduates and graduate students to cross disciplinary boundaries and university-community boundaries more easily.

A high-profile interdisciplinary university-community research center is a place that can promote CBPR by holding up established mid-career or senior CBPR faculty as role models. It also can act as a public relations agent for engaged research, communicating successful project outcomes through internal and external media coverage. By pulling together faculty who are often isolated in individual departments, a center organizes CBPR researchers into a single voice. It becomes an institutional advocate for engaged researchers, and gives them better bargaining power with colleagues.

Although a generous gift to a university can instantly create a CBPR center, the possibility that a center can be built on years of success of smaller projects is very real. The foundation for the Loyola's CURL was built through completion of a number of successful, visible, collaborative university-community policy research partnerships.<sup>16,17</sup> By providing visible examples of how CBPR could produce credible research, serve the community, and further the education of students, earlier initiatives provided a model on which a larger endowed center could be created.

## CONCLUSIONS

Tearing down the obstacles to more community-based participatory research within the academy and creating more

incentives for faculty involvement in CBPR is a long-term project. However, the foundation is well in place and construction is underway. The building blocks include ongoing efforts by committed faculty, strong involvement from community partners as well as past and current funding from foundations and government agencies. There is a leadership supportive of community-engaged research already in place in many higher educational institutions.

The challenge over the next few years will be how to use the resources we have already developed in expanding the CBPR movement. Demands for accountability from elected officials, various public and private institutions outside academia, and from students themselves make support for more effective university–community collaboration an even greater priority. With a declining economy and more demand on shrinking private and public resources, the efficiency, responsiveness, and impact of community-based participatory research is needed now more than ever.

It is also realistic to think that a stronger national, or even international, CBPR network can create new ways of communicating grassroots-based research and developing national and international policy. In the past, the difficulty of communicating among community-based initiatives has hampered the ability to move locally focused research partnerships beyond the local level. Over the past decade, with the dramatic increase in access to affordable to new forms of communication—from faxes and phone calls to e-mails and creation of web-based information centers—the infrastructure now exists to link local CBPR efforts. This exponentially increases the promise of CBPR as a research approach to insure that the voice of local communities is heard not only locally, but at regional, national, and international levels. It also will give CBPR the broader view and broader constituency with which it can effectively challenge business as usual in the academic world. The value of CBPR's stock is on the rise; now is the time to invest.

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